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No. 156.

GOLDEN.

BY E. NORMAN GUNNISON.

Oh, young and fair!  
Oh, sweet and rare!  
The sun went past the hedges,  
And rested on the horizon dim,  
And touched with gold its edges.

Through purple bars  
The light of stars  
Came down—the sunset over—  
And softened with their mellow rays  
The scene of new-mown clover.

On toward the lane  
The light of stars  
Came streaking through the meadow;  
Now touched with light—and then again  
One-half concealed by shadow.

Along the hill  
The night-bird's trill  
Came laden down with sweetness,  
The tints of gray across the sky  
Made up the scene's completeness.

Just by the hedge,  
Across whose edge  
Her hair hung burnished golden,  
A maiden listened to her swain  
Repeat the story olden.

The old, old tale;  
The secret's trill  
Can never never wear;  
Since Mother Eve came on this earth  
Each maid had had her lover.

And so they stood,  
Within wood  
And vane the night-shades darkened;  
And as the midnight grew space,  
The angels paused and hearkened.

Oh, heart of youth!  
Oh, heart of truth!  
Taking love's all—and giving:  
With your untaught philosophy  
Pointing the truth o' living.

In coming days  
When life's strange maze  
Your feet may tread together:  
Ye may not find its pathways trend  
Through fields of blooming heather.

The warp and woof  
Of life, loooth  
Some twine in twine in weaving;  
The hand that guides the shuttle's course  
May test your soul's believng.

But when life's page  
Marks for you—age,  
And silver threads with golden,  
Still other lives beside the hedge  
Shall tell the story olden.

## The Beautiful Forger:

OR,  
THE ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG GIRL.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLETT,  
AUTHOR OF "MADELEINE'S MARRIAGE," ETC., ETC.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE DISSOLVING REVELATION.

DR. MERLE was convinced by the report of his assistant, who was a capital draughtsman, to prepare a sketch from memory of the scene he had witnessed the preceding night. This was completed in a couple of hours; all but the lady's face. Her strange eyes had so bewildered Ulric that he had not taken careful note of her features. The sick man's face, the bed and table; the toilet, and figure of Louise, and the expression of affright upon her face, were accurately portrayed.

Merle was busy all the morning arranging his apparatus to produce an illusory scene. In the afternoon a lady was announced by the housekeeper. Dr. Merle showed her into the study himself. When she removed her veil, strange features were disclosed.

She came, however, from the doctor's visitor of the preceding evening. The vial of medicine, she said, had been accidentally broken, and she had been sent for more.

The doctor asked if the patient had taken any, and what its effect had been.

She replied he had taken some, and it had sent him into a quiet sleep. So her mistress had told her.

"Was he asleep at the time of the accident?"

"I think so, sir."

"Now, look you, my good woman," observed the physician, sternly regarding her; "I know exactly what took place at that time. Take a seat, and I will show you."

He fastened a sheet across the lower end of the room.

"Now, look at the picture that will presently appear."

He left the study. The two windows were closed from without, making the room perfectly dark.

A pale glimmer, like lamplight, began to appear on the sheet. In a few minutes the entire scene of the previous night was reproduced.

The woman at once recognized the scene; the furniture; the sick man's face; her own figure and that of her mistress. With a shriek, she started up, trembling and terrified. Instantly the picture vanished, and the windows were thrown open. Dr. Merle stood beside her.

"You see, madam, you were mistaken," he said, fixing his reproving eyes on her pale face. "The sick man was not asleep."



He threw himself on the ground at the lady's feet, removed his hat, and looked up in her face.

All was just as you have seen it, when the bottle was broken. You can not deceive me!"

The girl's hands were clasped and unclasped in the extremity of terror. "Oh, sir!" she exclaimed, "I did not mean to deceive you! But my mistress—"

"Nor can *she* deceive me, in any thing," said the doctor, emphatically. "Go, now; and tell Mrs. Paul Sloman she must come here for the medicine. I will give it only to her."

He waved his hand in dismissal.

The young woman, still trembling, turned to leave the room. She had hardly reached the entrance, when the front door was opened for some one.

It was a man scarcely yet of middle age, habited as a priest. The garb of a minister of the church was in those days more distinctive and picturesque than now. His eyes met those of the departing visitor for an instant; but Dr. Merle was close behind her, and while a cordial greeting was exchanged between the two men, the girl, hastily wrapping her cloak about her, walked rapidly from the house.

When she reached a shaded spot among some trees at a little distance, she stopped her almost flight, threw herself on the ground, and covered her face with her hands.

She did not hear the rustling of footsteps, nor see the figure slowly approaching. When she heard her name pronounced softly by some one close to her, she started, and looked up. Then she gave a low shriek, and sprung to her feet.

"You know me?" asked the priest; for it was he who had followed her.

"Antoine!" she gasped.

"Sit down, Louise, on this log. You are pale and trembling! Are you not glad to see me?"

"Oh, Antoine!"

"Father Hamil, you must call me. We are no longer as we were in Provence, five years ago, Louise."

Louise hesitated, and then said she would

"Five years!" echoed the girl, catching her breath like a sob.

"And then you and I loved each other, Louise; but poverty separated us. Now all is changed. My home is still a poor one, but I am vowed to the service of the church, and am sent here as a missionary."

"How did you know where I—" began the girl, recovering her composure.

"I knew nothing till I saw you at Dr. Merle's."

"I knew you at once, Antoine."

"You must call me Father Hamil. Tell me now, Louise, what you have done since we parted."

The girl looked down as she replied: "When I lost my home by my aunt's death, I entered the service of a young married lady—Madame Sloman."

"Had she not led a wild life in Paris?"

"She was but young when she married; and she came with Mr. Sloman to America."

"Bringing you?"

"Yes; I was her maid. I had not a franc for my own support. I was obliged to enter a service."

"You were the daughter of honest parents, Louise, and should have chosen the association of those in good repute."

"Madame made me excellent offers, Antoine—I beg pardon—Father Hamil—and her husband is a worthy man."

"It is said, Louise, that the house of Madame Sloman is the resort of suspicious characters."

"I do not believe, Father Hamil, that she means to do wrong. She is ambitious, and must have subordinates to work out her plans."

"Louise, you are a faithful daughter of the church?"

"Surely, Father—"

"I wish you to leave this lady's service."

"And starve? Or beg for a living?"

"Neither, my daughter. Where can I see to-morrow—to-morrow about dusk?"

Louise hesitated, and then said she would

be at that hour in the lane half a mile from Sloman's house.

"I will see you then, and give you counsel," said the priest. "Perhaps I may help you to employment. I shall not rest till you are settled as you ought to be. Good-bye, now."

He spread out his hands, as if in benediction over the girl's head, without touching her, and then turned back. Louise watched him till he was out of sight, and then went and unfastened her horse.

Toward sunset, next day, Mrs. Sloman again visited Dr. Merle's house, as commanded by the physician. She rode, as was the custom both for men and women; carriages being a luxury afterward introduced into common use; but she was attired as became a lady of condition. She wore a riding habit of dark-green cloth, fitting closely her tall figure of exquisite symmetry. A hat of the same color, made of rich velvet and adorned with a single long plume, rested on her head over a braided mass of raven hair. There was a rich color in her olive cheek, and her magnificent eyes were gloriously bright.

She had laughed to scorn the tale brought her by her frightened attendant. The idea of magic—or of a scene produced by supernatural means; or of a pretended knowledge by Dr. Merle of the secrets of her house!

Such pretences might terrify a stupid serving-woman, but could not impose upon her!

She resolved to teach the presuming medecastro his duty, and the danger of impudent interference with those higher in station than himself.

Ulric saw her as she alighted, but took pains not to show himself. It was important she should not recognize in the doctor's assistant the spy who had been secreted in her chamber. He hurried in to give Margaret notice, and went to call his master, who had gone to the little hamlet a couple of miles or so distant.

Margaret desired the lady to walk into

the parlor, served her with a cup of fresh water, and answered her numerous questions. In a few moments Mrs. Sloman had obtained all the information she desired about the physician's family, his residence in his present home, his probable length of stay, and that he had a daughter. She demanded to see Miss Merle.

Margaret informed her young mistress that she was asked for, and in a few minutes Helen came into the parlor.

Mrs. Sloman gave her own name, and said she had called as much to see Miss Merle as her father. She was surprised in her own mind to find a maiden so refined and lovely in so poor a house. She talked with the girl, and found her cultivated as well as beautiful. With all the tact she possessed, she strove to interest Helen in her conversation, and succeeded so well, that by the time Dr. Merle arrived, the two ladies were engaged in an animated colloquy as if they had been long acquainted with each other.

Dr. Merle's face clouded as he saw how matters stood. He greeted his visitor coldly, and desired her to walk into his study, without asking his daughter to accompany her.

"You must come to see me, dear, very soon," said the lady, graciously, as she pressed Helen's hand. "Take this visit to yourself, and be sure that you return it."

The doctor frowned, and muttered a negative. He showed the lady into his study with ceremonious deference, and requested her to be seated.

She commenced by laughingly describing the alarm and confusion of her maid at the scene that had been shown her, and asked if it could be seen by herself. She was curious about natural magic, though she had no belief in diabolical agency. There were demons enough in human form for the Prince of Evil to work out his designs with," she said, with a meaning smile.

Dr. Merle fully agreed with her. He replied that he would show her the scene, but refused to answer any of her questions.

The lady took her seat as directed; the sheet was put up, and the study darkened. The scene of the morning was again exhibited. Mrs. Sloman was startled, but she had been prepared for something extraordinary, and had self-control enough not to betray any agitation. She called attention to the fact that her own face was scarcely seen in the picture.

"That can be remedied," said the doctor, gravely, as the picture faded from view.

"Remain here, for you are, madame, and fix your eyes on this round hole in the wall. Afterward I will cast your horoscope."

The lady obeyed his directions, and sat motionless, for some time after Dr. Merle had left the study. By means of mirrors and lenses, a reflection of her face had been thrown on a scene in the adjoining apartment, prepared for oil painting. Ulric was busy sketching the face and putting in the coloring.

It was complete in a few moments, and was a striking likeness. The doctor returned to his study, and showed the portrait to his voluntary sitter.

This time she was surprised and angry.

"This is no work of magic," she said. "You have had my portrait taken while I sat there. What is your object? What do you mean by this? I gave you no leave. Bring it in and give it to me!"

"Pardon me; I can not part with it."

"What do you mean to do with it?" demanded she, fiercely.

"That depends on circumstances."

"I will not permit you to keep a portrait of me obtained by stratagem."

"You cannot help it, madame. Do not vex yourself needlessly. It depends on your own conduct whether any use is ever made of the portrait; any use which you would not like."

"On my conduct? This is strange language, sir."

"Would you like me to cast your horoscope, now, madame?" asked the doctor.

"Silence!" cried his visitor. "I do not believe in your power to read the future, any more than in your magical pretensions. You may impose on ignorant varlets—not on me! Once more, I command you to bring that portrait."

"Once more I refuse."

"You dare to defy me?"

"I dare, madame, for you are wholly unmoved. You came to me at first to obtain medicine to work out a foul purpose. I penetrated your mystery, and gave you what would have done no harm, had you administered it to him whom you wished to destroy. By means I shall never explain, I obtained knowledge of what passed after you left my house. I am fully aware of your plans, and intend to defeat them. You are under the observation of those interested to preserve the peace and safety of the community, and to interfere when it appears that crime is meditated or committed."

"You are bold, sir," muttered the lady, growing deathly white as her white teeth gleamed in a strange smile.

"I am bold in the cause of justice and right. Be you thankful that you are saved from the commission of further wickedness. Your reputation even now is not free from suspicion. Guard it more carefully in future."

"You shall repent this. This—and your sending a spy after me!" his visitor muttered; but she made no further remarks. She gathered up her skirt and quitted the house, without an adieu.

Like a spirit of evil intent on a work of destruction, she sped on her way home.

ward. Her handsome face was dark with passion, her lithe form was instinct with the strength born of it. There was determination in her compressed mouth, and a dangerous flush in her eyes.

Dusk had fallen as she reached the lane turning off from the main road by which she was going to her own house. She let her horse moderate his pace, and rode on through the shadows that now fell darkly across the path.

It was yet light enough to see figures; and as she gained a bit of rising ground, two persons appeared, partly in relief against the sky, partly lost in the shade. One she immediately recognized as that of her attendant, Louise. "Whom could she be talking with?

The man's figure was close to her; speaking, it appeared, confidentially. Now the girl clasped both her hands and looked upward, as if making some promise or vow. Then his hands were stretched toward her, as in farewell or benediction, and in a moment he turned away and disappeared.

#### CHAPTER V. THE WELCOME GUEST.

OLIVIA SLOMAN urged her horse forward, and as the distance rapidly lessened between her and the girl's figure, she caught sight of another masculine form advancing toward the girl. It was a tall, large-framed man, of majestic bearing. A keen pang of jealousy shot through Olivia's soul.

"Victor Ormsley!" she exclaimed. "What can he have to say to her? Does she meet him in secret?"

The conference between the new-comer and Louise had continued but a minute or two ere Olivia had dashed up to them. She gave a merry laugh, as if pleased to have startled them, but did not fail to notice that Louise looked confused and guilty.

The girl caught the look her mistress flung at her, and hung her head, turning away.

"Mrs. Słoman! I am fortunate not to miss you!" cried the gentleman she had called Victor Ormsley, as he came with outstretched hands to greet her. The transformation on Olivia's face was remarkable. She smiled graciously; her eyes sparkled, and she gave the gentleman a jubilant welcome.

"You were on the way to my house?" she said.

"I have just been there, Mrs. Słoman."

"You are formal, sir."

"Olivia, then—since you permit me to call you so. I have called to say good-by, perhaps for a few weeks."

"Good-by! Why, where are you going?"

"I have to go East on some business, and may not return in a month or two, though I may in a few days. I am very glad to see you; I would not have missed you for a great deal. I have seen Paul, and I hope he is beginning to grow better."

"You may go on to the house, Louise," said the lady; "and, stay, take my horse; I will walk the rest of the way."

She leaped from the horse and gave the bridle to the girl, with another searching look. Louise took the bridle and went on, leading the animal.

"You had not been long speaking with her?" she asked of the gentleman, when the girl was out of sight.

"Only a moment," he answered.

"Then who was it in such earnest conversation with her before I came up?"

"I do not know. I did not see any one."

"No—he had left her. He went when he heard you coming. It is strange; she does not know any one in this part of the country."

"Perhaps she has a follower?" suggested the gentleman, with a smile.

"No—she has no lovers; I would not permit it."

"You should extend to her the same indulgence, Olivia, that you required when—"

"No, I have seen the folly of such doings. And one never knows with whom one is acquainted, in this lawless region."

"True; you are right to be cautious."

"I have no confidence in any one, Victoria, but yourself."

"And in Paul," he added, musingly.

"Oh, Paul can do nothing; he is ill always. I have to nurse him and take care of him, and he can not take care of me. I trust only in you, Victor." She put her arm within his, as they walked along slowly toward the house.

"You do me honor. I am sorry I can do so little."

"But you have done a great deal. What should we have done without your help; your advances on the mortgages; you have been so generous. We might have starved outright!"

"Not a word more! It would be very strange if I should not help Paul a little. We have long been such friends."

"And me—do you not care for me, too, a little?" pleaded the lady, insinuatingly, slightly pressing the arm she held, and looking up into his face with appealing earnestness.

"Certainly; you and Paul both! You know that, Olivia."

Her manner suddenly changed.

"I have a favor to ask of you, Victor," she said, eagerly.

"What is it? You may be sure of any thing I can do."

"Let me have the keys of your large warehouse by the river, while you are gone."

"I will. I have them in my saddle-bags in your stable."

"And let no one else come near the place but myself, while I have them, without first coming to me."

"You shall have full sway. You may sell all the grain and iron stored there, if you like."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. But if I want to keep any thing securely myself, the place will be convenient. Are the doors and windows safe?"

"Every window is barred heavily with iron, and the doors are massive and secured by strong bolts. You may defy burglars; no one can get in."

"Or get out, either?" asked Mrs. Słoman.

"Old Larry Sterne, the fisherman who lives in the cabin a short distance down the river. He keeps the keys, as a rule, and he always sees to the packing of stores when they come up."

"There is a wharf near, where the boats land?"

"Close to the walls. But I do not expect any more boat-loads at present. You must

use all the produce you want—and don't be afraid of waste."

"How kind you are," she whispered, and again the light pressure on his arm.

"I only wish Paul could go with me," he answered.

They had reached the house, and the lady urged her companion to come in. Supper would soon be ready. She showed him into a parlor handsomely furnished for the time and locality; well-furnished, indeed, for a more civilized region. There were a piano and guitar, books, music and a few small paintings; there were sofas and lounges; and the carpet was of new and rich pattern. The man-servant had come in from the stable, and he lighted a lamp on a table in the center of the room. Mr. Ormsley took a chair, and looked over some old newspapers, while the lady of the house went to change her riding-dress.

She came in, wearing a fine merino of rich brown color, with white collar and cuffs. Her hair lay in heavy braids coiled around her head, without ornament. Only a brooch of fine-wrought gold incasing a single blood-red ruby, fastened the white linen at her throat, and two or three brilliants sparkled on her small white fingers. Her style of dress was subdued; yet nothing could hide the coquettish grace with which she wore it, nor the dark beauty of her face. It was a singular face, full of impetuous expression one moment, impassive and impenetrable the next; it seemed as if an impious mask were drawn over it at will. There was the luxuriance of a tropical flower in the splendor of her complexion, the vivid contrast of her abundant raven hair, and the paleness of her broad, low forehead. The large black eyes, under straight, thick eyebrows, and shaded by lashes long enough to touch her cheek, looked like springs suddenly revealed under clustering bushes; and they were as unfathomable as those springs shadowed by midnight.

She had glided stealthily into the room, and stood close by Mr. Ormsley, as he was glancing over the papers attentively. A glance at him will not be amiss, as he is of some importance to our story.

A tall and stalwart form, a dress of rich material, made in the style then peculiar to gentlemen of the better class, and massive features cast in a grand and noble mold, gave him an air of distinction. He evidently did not belong to this section of country. His complexion was browned by travel and exposure; his hair was grizzled, but he did not seem more than forty years of age. His face bore the deep lines of care or trouble, and it was easy to see that some painful recollection at nearly all times weighed on his spirits.

"How is Paul, now?" he asked, without looking up, as he heard the rustle of Olivia's dress.

"He is better; he will see you again presently; after supper," was her answer.

"But, Victor, I want to ask you something. David Ormsley—your brother—still living at your ranch—the hacienda?"

"Yes—of course; he and his family."

"They will remain there all winter?"

"I hope so; I should be sorry to find them gone. The property is not mine; he purchased it to live here. He has landed interests to keep him."

"And you—to whom the other land belongs—"

"Only part of it; and David holds the rest for me. I am a waif, Olivia; I come and go like the wandering wind. The same chance or hope that brought me here, may send me any day to the opposite side of the globe."

"When will you learn to give up visionary schemes?"

"When I have lost strength, means, or the hope of opportunity to make amends for wrong!"

"You have no clew—yet?"

"None. I only know how deeply I sinned; and that no reparation is possible!

"I deserve all I have suffered! Olivia, pray that you may be called to bear crushing misfortune rather than remorse and self-reproach."

"You are too tender of conscience."

"Paul, your husband, first opened my eyes; and for that I owe him everlasting gratitude."

"But he told you nothing! He knew nothing!" cried Olivia, recollecting a step, with her white lips strangely distorted.

"He was rational; I was mad! My best, truest friend! A life's devotion could not repay him!"

"Too sentimental!" muttered the lady.

In a low, sneering tone. Ormsley looked at her quickly.

She hastened to apologize; and added:

"Was it the part of a friend to inflict torture upon you?"

She put her hand on the back of his chair, and leaned over him tenderly.

"The torture was merited. My want of faith made me a victim. I have but to bear the fate I drew on myself."

"Drew on yourself?" echoed the clear voice, incredulously.

"Why speak so? What do you dare to insinuate?" exclaimed Ormsley, turning upon her, his brow contracted with a frown, his eyes flashing.

Olivia saw she had offended him.

"Oh, Victor, pray, forgive me! I am only a priest. How long is it since you have deceived you, as you said?"

"Six years before he married me."

"He had kept the letter two years before he had an opportunity of showing it to me."

"And after he convinced you, you set out—"

"To do what I could in reparation! I have not succeeded; yet, I do not abandon the hope of success."

"And that brought you to California?"

"In part only. I came on my brother's account. It was well I had some one to care for, or I should have gone mad."

"And some one to lavish your money upon?"

"I have done little for David, for he had a competence."

"To have some one to care for! Victor, have you never cared for me?"

"Or get out, either?" asked Mrs. Słoman.

"The place was once inside. The place was a prison in former years; and it has dusty corridors and cells where an army of war captives might be stowed away."

"Who has charge of the building?"

"Old Larry Sterne, the fisherman who lives in the cabin a short distance down the river. He keeps the keys, as a rule, and he always sees to the packing of stores when they come up."

"There is a wharf near, where the boats land?"

"Close to the walls. But I do not expect any more boat-loads at present. You must

"Olivia, have I not begged you never to speak of kindness from me?"

"But I must remember it!" she said, earnestly. "Victor, grant me one favor."

"Certainly; what is it?"

"I have enemies here; I have always had enemies. I have made an unscrupulous one within two hours' ride."

"Who is it?"

"I will not tell you his name; but he is my bitter foe. Promise me not to be prejudiced against me by any stories that may be brought to you."

"How can you think I would be?"

"Men are always ready to take away a woman's good name! Remember how it was about—"

"No need to remind me of that!" cried Ormsley, while a spasm of sharp pain convulsed his features.

"Be forbearing with me! Oh, Victor—should people—should any one—try to blacken my name?"

"I assure you, Olivia, I will listen to no tales against you!"

"I could not live if you thought evil of me! And, Victor—dear Victor—I implore you—give me another promise. I wronged you once; you would hate me if you knew what I did! Say that you will forgive me, if you ever find it out!"

Her words gushed forth with passionate force; she flung herself on her knees before him; she clasped his hand in both her own, which were cold as ice.

"You speak riddles, Olivia!" he exclaimed, in astonishment. "How did you ever do me wrong?"

"I did; but may I die the moment you discover it! Promise me your pardon, Victor. It is the secret of my life! Promise me your full pardon!"

It was in abject supplication that her eyes were raised over it at will.

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glancing at her from the corners of his eyes, while the smile on his face became a grin.

"I did not say it was a proposition," Helene answered, frowning slightly.

She was sounding him cautiously, and she had placed a golden inducement before the man whose nature she hardly knew yet.

Pedro at once assumed a sober countenance.

"What would I do, my lady? Well, if the offer came from one whose eyes were dark as yours, and whose voice said three thousand dollars, it is possible—"

"Ah, I think I know you, Pedro Gomez!"

He inclined his shaggy head.

"Then you will aid me? You will strike this enemy from my path? For, I will do even more, if you make no mistake. I will sign a document agreeing to give you half my fortune, after fifteen years have elapsed."

He opened his eyes in amazement.

"Or, further," she added, earnestly, "if that does not altogether suit you, I will give you your choice, between half my fortune and my hand in marriage—after fifteen years."

Pedro Gomez stared. He felt his veins warming, and the words of the beautiful girl tingled in his ears.

He was completely deceived by her tone. He believed that it might be possible for him, one day, to possess this lovely creature. While it seemed preposterous, it filled him with rapture.

"Lady," he stammered, "I will do anything you command!"

"It is well. My enemy is to be removed."

"And I will remove her for you!" exclaimed Pedro, whose gaze was still swimming, whose ears were still tingling.

She arose and went to the desk on the small table, from which she obtained a tiny vial.

While she was doing this, Pedro was thinking:

"She is not an angel—she is all devil! But she is beautiful! I am in love with her—I, Pedro Gomez, the dirty gardener! And if I live for fifteen years—she will be my wife, for she has promised to put such an agreement upon paper. Ho! ho! what good luck! And three thousand dollars in cash money! I am rich! I am happy! I will obey her in any thing!"

He was interrupted by Helene, who approached him.

"You see this vial, Pedro Gomez?"

"Yes."

"It contains a deadly poison."

"Yes."

"The way to administer it is by putting three drops—mark, only three drops—in the center of a rose."

"In the center of a rose," he repeated, paying close attention, and receiving the poisonous vial from her.

"The one who smells of the rose will, at the first inhalation, give a quick start, and look surprised! At the second—which can not be resisted—the effect is to produce drowsiness. Then there must be somebody to grasp and sustain the stricken one, who will be likely to fall, and press the rose close to the nostrils—remember, press the rose close to the nostrils! Can you recollect?"

"Yes, my lady; I have it by heart. But there is danger in all this."

"None. The cause of death can never be traced to the rose. Will you perform the task properly?"

"It shall be done," promised Gomez.

"Swear it."

"I swear it shall be done!" vowed the Spaniard, sinking to one knee and raising one hand.

"When will you do it?"

"Within one week."

"You do solemnly swear, that, within one week, you will administer poison to my enemy, through the rose?"

"Yes."

"Then you will earn more money by it in one day than you can make with the spade in five years. When it is done I will hear of it without your telling me. Come to me afterward, and you shall have three thousand dollars."

"I think I can trust her," flashed through his mind. "And—by the devil!—if she fooled me, I would make her repent it! But no, she dare not trifl with me. And so beautiful! And, perhaps, after fifteen years, she will be the wife of Pedro Gomez! Excellent fortune! What a rise: from a poor gardener, to the position of a gentleman and the husband of this devil-of-a-girl!"

"Well, Pedro Gomez?" interrogatively, and cutting short his grand painting of mind-pictures.

"Yes, my lady. I was only thinking how generous of you to honor me so—to honor the poor gardener!"

Her red lips curled, as she gazed down on the uncouth form; but he did not see it, for he was bowing lower, and shaking his head from side to side while speaking.

"Get up, Pedro."

"Yes, my lady," and inwardly: "What a sweet voice! If she is ever my wife, she shall sing me to sleep every night!"

Plainly we see that the hint of becoming his wife was a cunning artifice, for he was thoroughly deluded, and ready to do whatever Helene Cerrey might wish.

The beauty had other intentions for the future of Gomez, while she played a part now that made him pliant in her hands.

"But, lady"—as it suddenly struck him that the most important part of his instructions had been omitted—"who is it I am to remove from your path, with the deadly rose?"

"Her name is Florose Earncliffe," and as she uttered the name, she fastened her dark orbs in a hard, half-frowning gaze upon his face.

Pedro started back. The vial nearly fell from his clasp, and his swarthy face grew red.

"Lady—"

"Not a word! You have sworn to remove my enemy. That enemy is your young mistress, Florose. Remember your oath! Remember the three thousand dollars!"

"And the beautiful devil who may some day be my wife!" added Pedro, in his own mind, trying himself, to set aside the scruples which had arisen at mention of Florose.

And between Helene Cerrey and himself, he easily quelled any weak feelings that might have possessed him.

Ten minutes later, he left the house.

And Helene Cerrey was walking back and forth in her boudoir, smiling in triumph as she pondered on the oath of Gomez to remove her rival.

## CHAPTER VII. CARLOS MENDOZA, THE QUACK.

NIGHT.

Eight o'clock.

With the last stroke of the iron tongue that proclaimed the hour, a carriage rolled away from before the residence of Helene Cerrey.

Going from her house, we are right in supposing that its occupant was the plotting, dark-eyed belle.

While she is speeding away, we turn to another locality, to an establishment near the corner of Willow and — streets.

It was a dilapidated affair; a dingy little store, with one bow window, the frame of which was sunken and rickety, and the contents of which was composed of countless bottles of various sizes, bearing numerous labels of dusky condition. One miserably-sputtering lamp shed a sickly glimmer over the suspicious-looking bottles; and a row of monstrous candles on a shelf inside, served to display the stock of Carlos Mendoza.

There were several customers in the store; and old Carlos—a Spaniard, of many years, with pointed features, slim body, of short stature, and wearing a long black ministerial frock-coat—was bowing and bending while he served their wants, and occasionally speaking words of advice.

As the withered old Quack attended to these customers, a carriage whirled past the door—stopping a short distance beyond. In a moment it rumbled on again; and in another moment a new customer entered the shop of Carlos Mendoza. This last was a woman, closely veiled, and attired very plainly.

She did not stop at the counter, but passed straight on, disappearing through a narrow back door.

"Ah!" thought old Carlos, as he gave a momentary glance after the comer; "there is the beautiful belle! She comes again to see Mendoza, the Quack. What does she want this time? I shall learn presently, when these twopenny buyers clear out. Malediction! they spend one dollar, where this beautiful Helene Cerrey is paying me hundreds! I have no time for them when she comes. Will they never begone?"

Carlos Mendoza was very anxious to join the visitor who awaited him in the back room. But the customers in his shop annoyed him greatly by standing and talking after they had made their purchases.

Then, however, the last one had departed, he made haste to close and lock the door.

"Now then!—now then, for my hundred-dollar customer!" rubbing his skinny hands together and hurrying toward the back room.

Helene Cerrey was seated at a large round table, apparently impatient at his long delay.

"Ah!" he squeaked, "I am sorry you had to wait so long, madam."

We state here that Helene was a wealthy orphan. Also, that it was a habit with Mendoza to call her "madam," for their acquaintance was, by no means, a fresh one.

"I thought you would keep me all night, Carlos Mendoza!"

"Oh, no; not even if I had to drive those ragged buyers off by force. But I am here now; how can I serve Madam Helene Cerrey this time?"

"I have found use for the poison I got you yesterday."

"Ah!" smiling grimly.

"Now I want something else."

"Something else? What is that something else?"

"An asp, Carlos Mendoza—an asp with a poisoned fang!"

"Ho-ho!" exclaimed the Quack, within himself, "she wants an asp! What is she going to do with an asp?" Then aloud: "How did you know I could give you an asp, eh?"

"You are forgetful. I learned it from your own mouth. When I asked you yesterday for poison, you suggested an asp. But I preferred the means of the deadly rose. Now, give me an asp; and also, give me a drug to produce instant stupor—a drowsiness in which the asp can be applied."

"But these things are very precious," whined old Carlos. "My asps are quite expensive."

"What do they cost?"

"The price is two hundred dollars."

"Bring me one, then; and make haste. Make up the drug, too. I must get away from here. The smell of your bottles sickens me."

The shriveled old Quack started to procure what she wanted—lighting a candle, and descending to the cellar, where he kept the horrible things. And as he went, he was muttering:

"So young, and so beautiful! Yet she is a deep one, for she uses drugs and poisons. Ah! I know what you are at, Helene Cerrey. You mean to poison Florose Earncliffe, your rival! You shall pay old Carlos much more money, yet, to keep your secret. I know I know all about it. You can't conceal it from me! I have my thumb on others, rich as you. But the asp? What can she want with the asp? I will find that out, too."

It was the third night after that on which Helene Cerrey visited Mendoza, the quack.

In the parlor of Wart Gomez' snug house, husband and wife and child were assembled—the latter, a girl, four years and three months old. And Zetta, the servant—who was about Helene's own age—was amusing the child, while her master and mistress conversed.

On this evening Carline appeared to be very uneasy. Her eyes glanced restlessly about; her voice was unsteady; and Gomez missed the sunny smile with which she was wont to welcome him, when he returned to his home at nightfall.

"Carline," he said, "you are too sad tonight. You are anxious without good cause. Come—look up and smile; and think no more of Cortez Mendoza. We need not fear him."

"I can not drive off the feeling, Wart," was the despondent return. "I am trembling in the dread of something terrible that is about to happen."

"Why should you?"

"Cortez Mendoza will never forgive you the blow you struck him."

"I could not help it, Carline! The scoundrel was heard to boast, in a wine-shop, that you had once been his sweet-heart."

"And was it not true, Wart?" with a shudder.

"Ay, but he deceived you—deceived you mother! He came to you, dressed in fine clothes, and with pretty speeches. He said he was rich; and I proved to you that he lied—he was poor, an adventurer, and no fit companion for one so pure as Carline Mendoza. My blood boiled when I heard of his language, so I struck him for his baseness."

He was handsomely proportioned; with an attractive face, brilliant eyes, and skin of extraordinary purity—the more extraordinary, because Cortez was addicted to habits of dissipation. There was evidence of great muscular strength in him; and a bearing that showed he well knew of his attractiveness.

On this occasion, his face was glowing as

if with angry emotion, and he was grinding his fine white teeth savagely.

"Malediction!" cried Carlos. "What is it, my boy? You are mad!"

"Yes, I am mad—malediction!" hissed the handsome Cortez—using, it will be seen, the favorite exclamation of his father.

"Be calm, my dear Cortez—be calm! Sit down, and tell me what has happened."

Cortez sat down; but he instantly started up and began striding across the apartment, with clenched fists and scowling brow.

Carlos rang a tiny bell that was upon the table.

The summons brought a negro, who appeared at another door which led to the upper story of the rickety building.

"Bring us some wine, Farak," he said; "and be quick about it."

And when the negro had gone for the wine:

"Sit down, Cortez, my dear boy; tell me what's the matter."

"Matter enough!" growled the young Spaniard. "You know Wart Gomez?"

"Oh, Wart Gomez! the son who quarreled with his father, Pedro, on account of Carlina Mendoza!"

"Yes—he who married Carlina Mendoza. Malediction!"

"Your old sweetheart."

"Yes."

"But what of Wart Gomez?"

"We quarreled, three days ago."

"Ho! A quarrel with Wart Gomez!"

"Well?"

"Wart—I—"

"It is nothing—the jar of opening the drawer, perhaps."

"I could not help but feel that it foretold some great calamity."

"Po!"

"For, Wart," her voice sunk low, and she turned her pale face earnestly to his, "it flew open in the same way just before my mother's mother died."

"Ah! yes; now I remember, you promised to tell me all concerning this mysterious star, and the fates attached to it. It has a strange history, you say?"

"Yes—very strange. I will tell you. And then you can see that I am not uselessly worried by its box lid flying open in my face."

"I struck back again!" gulping down a glassful of wine.

"Good!" squeaked the father, rubbing his skinny hands till the knuckles cracked, and seeming highly pleased.

"A challenge followed. He was to have met me to-night, at sunset, to fight with pistols."

"Yes—yes. And you would have shot him!"

"But he did not come! Malediction!" shouted Cortez, smiting the table with his fist.

"Ho! how cowardly!"

"Instead, he sent this note. Read it." He threw a slip of paper toward his father; and the latter read as follows:

**CORTÉZ MENDOZA:**

"I shall not meet you. For two reasons, I will not fight you: first, I have a wife and child who depend upon my labor; second, you are not worthy of my anger. WART GOMEZ."

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# SATURDAY JOURNAL

**THE Saturday Journal**

Published every Monday morning at nine o'clock.

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**Chat.**—The Prairie Chief says to its readers: "Those of our people who wish an entertaining and instructive paper should subscribe immediately for the SATURDAY JOURNAL." Just what a great number of readers are doing. One pleasing feature of the JOURNAL's circulation is that it goes so largely in homes and families. A good family paper by no means implies one that is filled up with recipes for pies and puddings, rules of conduct, essays on education, etc., etc. On the contrary, a real family and fireside journal is the hardest kind of a weekly to get up, for the reason that its interest must be so varied as to reach and satisfy the old and young equally; it must be grave and gay; it must have matter that will command attention for its novelty, freshness and enteraining nature; it must be well prepared, well illustrated, well printed on good paper. All this the SATURDAY JOURNAL aims to accomplish; and its steadily increasing circulation through the mails is the best of evidences that it is doing not only well for itself but well for the homes of America, for which it caters.

In answer to the inquiry of a correspondent who lost a valuable manuscript by the confiscation of all matter only partially paid in postage, we say, the authority for such procedure is assumed to lie in the following sections of the Postal law:

SECTION 151. That all mail matter deposited for mailing, on which at least one full rate of postage has been paid as required by law, shall be forwarded to its destination, charged with the unpaid rate, to be collected on delivery.

SECTION 152. That if any mail matter, on which by law the postage is required to be prepaid at the mailing office, shall by inadvertence reach its destination without such prepayment, double the prepaid rates shall be charged and collected on delivery.

It would indeed puzzle a "Philadelphia lawyer" to extract from these provisions a right to impose a triple postage, and failing to receive it of the person to whom the package is addressed, to confiscate the package and send it to the Dead Letter office. Thousands of dollars' worth of manuscripts have so been made way with, for while the Government ought to be held responsible. The law requires no exposition to defend it from this outrageous invasion of property right. It says, as plain as words can say it, that all matter on which even one rate has been prepaid shall be duly forwarded to its destination, and the still unpaid rate duly collected on delivery. But, it adds, if by any reason a package gets into the mail having nothing prepaid on it, then collect double rates on delivery. That is all. We have little confidence in any officer who can so read this law as to extract from it the right to levy triple rates, and to confiscate all manuscripts and correspondence which refuses to submit to the extortion—very little confidence indeed. And in this matter we speak the mind of every editor and publisher in New York city, we are sure.

A late report from Washington says: "According to the reports of the Internal Revenue office, the number of distilleries in operation on the 1st inst., was 31, with a daily producing capacity of 278,619 gallons, being a daily increase during January over December of 38,921 gallons. What a horrible showing is this! Every gallon of that liquor represents crime, suffering, death; and yet, month by month we witness a steady increase

in the amount manufactured. It is "blood money" indeed that comes from its taxation. We are literally "peopling Hell" when we in any way encourage this traffic in liquor. "A daily producing capacity of 278,619"—over one hundred million gallons per year! Are we to become a nation of drunkards?

The destruction of buffalo on our Western plains is something sad to contemplate. Great slaughter was made during the last four months of last year. One firm in Leavenworth received 30,000 hides per month, while two others in Kansas City received 15,000 each in the same time. This is at the rate of 2,000 slain per day. The immense piles or stacks of hides to be seen at all the stations along the line of the Kansas Pacific Railroad bear witness to the slaughter. Prof. Mudge (of Manhattan, Kansas), who is well posted in the economy of the plains, places the number killed per day at 1,000, which is sufficiently high to insure the early extinction of the species.

Must this slaughter continue? Congress, it seems to us, might interfere to prevent the destruction of the race as it has interfered in Alaska to prevent the destruction of seals.

## Foolscap Papers.

**Whitehorn's Dinner Speech.**  
From the London Dimes.

The public dinner given to Mr. Whitehorn on the occasion of his last visit to England was a great success. Many great and effective speeches were made by prominent men. Mr. Carl Isle said he knew the moment that Mr. Whitehorn landed on the British shore that it was him, for he had felt the island shake. He was pleased to see him.

Mr. Tom Hues said every one in his parish knew Whitehorn was here, as all the milk turned sour on a sudden. He was glad to welcome him.

Dr. Darwin said it did him more good to see Whitehorn than it would to see one of his original grandfathers who were monkey monkeys. He was proud of the moment.

The Marcus of Boot said he knew Mr. Whitehorn was in the kingdom, for he had seen the frogs out on his farm turning handsprings. He was overjoyed to meet him.

Hon. Madstone knew Whitehorn had come one of the dog-irons in his fire-place began to bark. This was the proudest hour of his life.

John Bright said he was happier on this occasion than at any other moment since he invented his celebrated disease. His joy was complete.

Martin Farquhar Tuppence felt like he could write another book of Proverbial Hydrophobia standing on his head.

The Marcus of Forlorn said he had seen Mr. Whitehorn and was willing to live; and said that all now should drink at Mr. Whitehorn's health and expense. "Gentlemen, charge your glasses—to Mr. Whitehorn."

Mr. Whitehorn then arose.

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen: the distinguished honor you have done me this evening fully comes up to my expectations, and on behalf of the people of the United States I thank you for this good dinner you have so kindly prepared for me. Were it not for the momentous affairs which must soon call me back to the land of liberty and the home of the eagle, I should dearly love to stay and board with you. The name of England is associated with all that is high and pure in literature and philosophy, but I did not believe she had such good cooks before. I came here this evening a stranger and awful hungry, and I have been overwhelmed with the hospitality of the English character and the excellence of your mutton-chops—with gravy. When I look around me to-night it is the only thing that disappoints me is that I see none of the crowned heads here. I should have been glad to take those crowned heads by the hand and express my great satisfaction at their joy of meeting me. But the roast beef was splendid!

Old England! how my heart thrills at its sound! It is from her generous shores that our table sauce comes, and here is manufactured those nice British hose! I am proud to say that I have one of them on tonight. (Cheers.) It is from here that our magazines get all their short stories. (Groans.) Where are the responsive hearts that have not heard of English muffins? (Hear! hear!) The immortal fame of her Diplomats and half-and-half is world wide!

I pleases me to address and enlighten you, and my pride and happiness would be complete to-night were it not for the fear that I have eaten too much; but, gentlemen of Britain, that ox-tail soup was the best I ever gormandized. (Great Applause.)

Our fore-and-fathers came over from England, and brought Plymouth Rock with them for ballast, and good ballast it was, too. What would we have done if they had not come over? I pause to take a drink and give it up. They carried the Goddess of Liberty to our shores, and on the American soil planted the germs of freedom and large and improved pumpkins; both have thriven until their branches reach from sea to sea, and from sea to saw, and back to Z and C again.

I am proud of England. Did she not allow us to lick her in the Revolution, and also in 1812? (Wild applause.) And ain't we able to do it again? (Hear! hear!) If there was any way by which I could be made an English duke, I would not consider it beneath my dignity to sell off my cow and calf and spend the remainder of my life in making Britain the greatest empire on the earth, which, I think, she is at the present day in the matter of baked beans. (Applause.) I might even consent to the office of Lord High Commissioner of the royal Boot-jack. (Hoaray.)

What has America done for Great Britain? Has she not sent all her authors over here to receive your homage and your public dinners, so that when they get home they might sit down and write books on how Lord D—scratched his titled head; the exact size of Earl somebody's paper collar; how Viscount some-one-else picked his teeth, and other knightly characteristics? Thrice happy England! (Multitudinous tumultuous).

Gentlemen, it pleases me to know that my last book has circulated so extensively in England. I carried it around in my pocket everywhere I have been yet. Indeed, I feel grateful. If Oxford confers the ninety-ninth degree in the shade upon me for my great efforts of making the abstract sciences so simple that they are no sciences at all, I shall not feel disappointed. (Vociferous vocalisms.)

A late report from Washington says: "According to the reports of the Internal Revenue office, the number of distilleries in operation on the 1st inst., was 31, with a daily producing capacity of 278,619 gallons, being a daily increase during January over December of 38,921 gallons. What a horrible showing is this! Every gallon of that liquor represents crime, suffering, death; and yet, month by month we witness a steady increase

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"He's hiding in some corner, perhaps?"  
"There ain't a corner for him to get into," said the outlaw; "it runs right chuck into the rock. I was down hyer onc't."

The pursuers went straight on; they had ceased to track the fugitive by his foot-steps in the sand, as it was plainly evident that he must have gone directly onward.

The passage was scarcely wide enough to permit two persons to walk abreast; it twisted first to the right and then to the left, and a hundred yards farther on ended abruptly, the way barred by the impenetrable rock.

The outlaws paused in astonishment; they had not brought the fugitive to bay, as they had confidently expected.

"The devil seize him!" cried the chief, in a rage; "where can he have hidden himself?"

The road-agents gazed at each other with blank faces. The disappearance of Talbot was incomprehensible—ay, miraculously.

"Pr'aps he didn't come this way?" suggested one of the band, anxious to account for the strange event.

" Didn't we trace his foot-steps in the sand?" cried Rob, angrily.

"Let us go back and track him carefully," suggested another.

"A fine chance we'd have of tracking him now, by his foot-steps in the sand, after we've trampled like a drove of wild horses over the trail," said Rob, sarcastically.

"I have it, cap'n!" cried one of the men; "he came as far as this and then turned back into the prison cave again."

"Perhaps so," answered Rob, thoughtfully; "but if he did do so, he can not escape us, for there is but one road from the prison chamber, and that leads directly to the council-hall; and even if he has got as far as that, he can go no further, for the rest of the band are in the outer chamber beyond."

Then they retraced their steps; but, though they searched carefully through the vaulted chamber, and even looked into the stony cell which had been designed for Talbot's coffin and tomb, no traces of the man could they find.

The rattlesnake, too, had disappeared; the reptile had retreated into some crevice of the rock, secure from observation.

The band returned to the council-chamber and there they found other members of the gang, so it was clear that the fugitive had not come that way.

The outlaw chief was indeed terribly enraged at the escape of Talbot, for now it was life against life!

"He must be within the cave somewhere, boys!" the chief exclaimed. "There must be no rest for us until we find him, or discover in what way he has contrived to avoid our search. I thought that every corner of the cave was known to us, but there must be some secret passage in the rocks which has escaped us. So, provide yourselves with candles, and some of you make torches of the pine boughs. We'll explore the passage again."

Aided by the lights, they searched high and low, but, as before, they found no trace of the fugitive—no secret passage in the rock.

"This man must be Satan or one of his imps," Rob cried, in anger, as the men gathered in the council-hall, after their fruitless search.

The brigand chief now dispatched three of his trustiest men to patrol the canyons near to the mouth of the cave.

The mind of the mountain brigand was very ill at ease. If Talbot succeeded in escaping, and bore away with him the secret of the cave and the means of entrance thereto, good-by to the safety of the stronghold of the road-agents! The mountain cavern would be more likely to prove their tomb, rather than their fortress.

And Talbot—keen-witted, strong-armed Injun Dick, strange blending of the iceberg and the volcano—how had he escaped from the toils of his terrible foes?

In blind haste, he had dashed onward in the darkness, not knowing whether the passage would lead, whether to freedom or to death.

The sharp rocks tore his outstretched hands until the red drops dripped from the white fingers; but onward he went—behind him, certain death; before him, uncertain chance.

Talbot felt that he could not keep up the terrible pace much longer; his breath was coming thick and fast, and the great sweat-drops rolled down his forehead; when, suddenly, both hands came in contact with the surface of the jagged rock, and the terrible knowledge that he had gone to the end of the passage flashed upon him in an instant.

With the quickness born of desperation, he tried the surface of the wall with his hands as high as he could reach, in hope to find some opening leading into another gallery like in nature to the first; but vain was the trial. He felt that he was caught like a rat in a trap. He had received but a respite, not a pardon.

Strong man though he was, Talbot groaned aloud in agony. Then to his ears came a distant sound. Full well he understood the meaning of that noise. The road-agents, alarmed by their confederate, were even now upon his track, with intent to drag him back to that damp tomb from whence the poisonous reptile had saved him.

The distant sound of the outlaws' tread resounded, hollow and dismal, among the arches of the vaulted passage, and grew more and more distinct as they came nearer and nearer.

Then the thought came to the mind of the hunted man that, perhaps, in the passage-way along which he had come there might be some crevice in the rock wherein he might hide, and thus for a while escape the search.

And so, while the road-agents paused for a moment by the side of their comrade, stricken down by the fangs of the rattlesnake, Talbot, with eager, trembling hands, sought along the wall on either side for a place of concealment. It was a fearful risk, for each step that Talbot took brought him nearer and nearer to the men who were hunting him down, thirsting for his blood.

"Heaven aid me!" cried the desperate man, in wild despair, as step after step brought him nearer and nearer to his enemies, and his hands fell only on the cold surface of the solid rock.

Then short and feverish steps the fugitive takes; twenty times the jagged wall tears his nervous hands; then, with the curses and shouts of the outlaws ringing in his ears, as they again advance on the chase,

he catches his foot against a projecting rock and falls headlong to the ground. The fine sand cuts his face and chafes his mouth and nose; he heeds not that; he is conscious of one thing only; his right hand, extended sideways, strikes, not the solid rock, but empty air!

Oh, joy! Level with the ground, not a foot from his head, is a rounded cavity through which his body can pass.

He thinks not of what may be within—that perhaps he comes untriven to the home of the rattlesnake; that the crested serpent may, even as he enters, be coiled in deadly folds ready to strike its fangs into his flesh; he thinks only that the foe is on his track, and while their feet are treading the sands of the gallery, and the flickering light of their candles pierces the gloom not ten paces from him, he drags himself through the cavity, and discovers that there is room for him to stand upright. He rises to his feet, and while, with oath and shout, the road-agents go trooping by, separated from him only by a foot of rock, with an exulting laugh he steps forward in the darkness. A single step only, and then the laugh turns to a cry of terror, for he has stepped into empty space, and wildly clutching at the air, he goes down, down into that awful pit.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

JOHN RIMEE.

The young stranger, who had called himself John Rimee, paid Shook for his breakfast and then left the house. Colonel Jacks, who had watched the young man intently while he was paying, followed him.

Rimee called to the hostler to bring out his horse. He evidently was ill at ease, and started with a nervous shiver when he turned and found the old soldier at his elbow, apparently watching him.

"A fine morning, sir," the colonel said.

"Yes, sir," returned the stranger. He did not like the scrutiny of the ex-officer, but a certain air of command—of dignity—in the ex-colonel's bearing, had its weight.

"A stranger to the Bar, I take it?" the colonel said.

"Yes," answered the stranger, just a little abrantly.

"I trust, sir, that you will pardon my questions," the soldier continued, with stately dignity, mingled with a hauteur that was natural to the man, a gentleman by birth and breeding.

"Oh, certainly," the young stranger said, impressed, in spite of himself, by the colonel's manner.

"I assure you, sir, that it is no idle curiosity. I question you, sir, because your face is strangely familiar to me. It recalls events which years ago shaped the whole current of my life."

The stranger listened attentively, and just a slight frown gathered on his brow. From under his long lashes he looked searchingly at the face of the colonel, as if he was striving to recall something from the past.

"I am sure, sir, that I shall be pleased to afford you any information in my power," the young man replied, after quite a pause. It was as if he had been deliberating what to say.

"If I may take the liberty to ask your name?" the colonel added. He was strangely agitated, and his usually cool gray eyes were snapping, and the pale lips were trembling under the short, bristly mustache.

"John Rimee."

"Rimee—Rimee!" the old soldier repeated.

"I am sure you, sir, that it is no idle curiosity. I question you, sir, because your face is strangely familiar to me. It recalls events which years ago shaped the whole current of my life."

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say he has been treated like a lackey by those purse-pride aristocrats who order his pictures in the same way they would order a load of coals—as a mere matter of buying and selling; only as *his* commodity embraces brains he is less independent than Paddy the drayman; he is made to feel that it is purely by favor he is permitted to use them to their advantage. He must work hard, poor fellow! He looks worn—almost ill. He is gaining popularity very rapidly, mamma says, and I daresay overtakes his strength. Artists and writers and the like have so much nervous force, they never think it necessary to rest."

He laid down his brush and turned to her—

"Over at last, Miss Redesdale. Have you found it very much of a bore?"

"None whatever. You permitted me a luxurious attitude in an easy-chair and nothing to do. That suited me, for I like energy in others, and idleness for myself. Why, there is the bell for luncheon. The morning has passed quickly. Come, Mr. Kenyon, mamma will be expecting to see you, I know."

"I think—I have some engagement—"

"It's not so binding but it can be broken if you're not positive regarding the fact. No excuses, sir."

"As my lady says," with a bow. "But I stay I shall claim the fulfillment of a promise from you. You're to favor me with your views of my picture on exhibition, you remember; let me take you to the gallery this afternoon."

"I'll go, with pleasure, but I never promised. I have a very tenacious memory, and you simply assumed my willingness."

"Since you are willing, I am satisfied."

The gallery was thronged that afternoon. Something new by somebody noted had just been put upon exhibition, and the crowds consequent upon such an event were drifting through. Kenyon saw how it was at a glance, and turned back at the threshold.

"Let me pilot you around by the side entrance, free to *habitus*, and so avoid the scrambling and pushing necessary to break a way through that living barrier!"

He led the way to a small door opening into a side apartment.

"This ante-room, Miss Redesdale, is filled up with merely second-class productions, the first attempts of promising genius, and the like. There is one of my own, now banished to the precincts. What hopes and what expectations I built up with that picture! Alas, 'twas all the baseless fabric of an idle dream! The canvas, once so bright in its pristine tints, has grown dingy, you see; the glowing ardor of aspiring youth has put on the 'hodden gray'—disappointment claims me for her own."

Florry imagined she detected a degree of pathos under this extravaganza. It did seem pitiful that such bright aspirations, such tremulous hopes hanging by slender threads, should be ruthlessly crushed. They drew near the curtained arch separating this from the main hall.

You'd scarcely believe it, Miss Redesdale, but this is one of the early productions of our lion rampant to-day. It's sure to be taken out, hung in a *softened light*, and sold at a fabulous price one of these times. There is the advantage of having made name, you see."

He talked on in a modulated tone, referring to different points in the piece, and with all her senses for the moment merged into the single one of hearing, she was not hearing a single word of his.

Two men were talking on the opposite side of the curtain. It was Lynne's voice, forcible though suppressed, which first struck upon her ear.

"I tell you, Marquestone, I can't do better than that. Lord knows how you've managed to get them all in your hands, I don't. If you've any devil's play behind, it, you may find it the worse for you—that's all. You'll not always have the upper hand."

"There, my dear fellow, don't get excited," answered the colonel's smooth tones. "Not the least use in the world, you see. Of course I don't want to discommod you, and luck's sure to turn before long. Deuced lucky dog you seem to be altogether. How about that fifteen thousand a year and the little incumbrance ready to fling themselves at your feet at a minute's notice?"

A quick blaze flashed into the hazel eyes, and she set her teeth as a spasm of shame and anger swept over her. That any one should dare to refer to her in that slighting way! that he should let such words be spoken and raise neither hand nor protest!

Kenyon's voice recalled her.

"Take my arm, Miss Redesdale. There's a horrid jam out there, but we'll escape the worst of it."

He swept back the curtain as he spoke, and Florry turned her indignant face to confront those two where they stood. She was just one second too late. Mr. Lynne and his friend, the colonel, had turned away arm-in-arm, and while she looked, the crowd closed the gap between them.

"There, now we can breathe again. That tussle has certainly brought out your latent spirit of the aggressive order. You're too flushed and animated for gentle Amy Robart, while you look like that."

"Then paint me not in my headstrong moods," answered Florry, with a light laugh. "Oh, Mr. Kenyon!"

"It is my masterpiece, I think."

He drew a little aside while she studied the picture. A stretch of river scenery with a moonlit sky arching over it—a fringe of trees upon the bank, with a parti-colored leaf here and there catching the light—a little boat fantastically painted in the form of a shell drifting over the silvery sheen of the water's smooth surface. A shell bearing two female figures; the first standing upright, the hands outstretched, the face beaming as it inspired; the other kneeling, with a torrent of bright hair falling back from a childlike countenance which wore an expression of rapt trustfulness, and the little white hands were clasped upon the bosom as if in prayer.

Florry put out her hand to drop it with a thrilling pressure on his arm.

"The Lorette," said she, without removing her eyes. "And you have given the beautiful deceptive spirit my face. That is the way it appears, lulling its victim to fancied security, fascinating with its siren's song, while they drift on to the certainty of destruction ahead. And that is Isola—dear little Isla—kneeling there, held by that weird enchantment, never knowing that her trustfulness is leading her straight to cruel death."

An agitated pallor was upon her face and her lips were quivering with strong emotion. He had nervously himself for whatever might come, knowing how strong had been the attachment between the two girls.

"You will observe that you have been an

inspiration to me from the very first. That picture has brought such favorable notice as I have gained, and it was suggested by my first sight of you upon the night of our first meeting."

He spoke in a perfectly composed manner and with unchanged countenance, but his heart was swelled well-nigh to bursting with the wild anguish of the flooding memories called up by that fair, girlish, pictured face.

"If it should be prophetic," breathed Florry, awe and pain in her voice—"if it should! You don't know—how should you?—that my little Isa was married secretly on that New Year's Eve after you left the school. You were gone quite away before that, but you would not have known had you been there still. It was a secret even from me—the first one of all her life Isola would not have trusted to me." Before that night when I persuaded her to the trip upon the river, I am sure she never had a thought but all the world might have known without reproach to her; after that, something indescribable came between us, so slight at first that I never knew when it began or when it took actual form. That New Year's Eve she had permission to go out, or went without permission. I had afterward reason to think, and she was married that night. I did not know it until weeks later, when she was discharged and sent away—Heaven knows where or to what fate. I have wondered until I grew sick at heart for her sake.

"You never knew whom she wedded—never suspected, nor heard surmised?" There was an understrain of eagerness in his question which he could not repress, but she was too deeply moved to observe it.

"Never. There were the classic students at the rector's in the village, you know, and collegians through the country about home for the holidays. It was quite impossible to fix upon any one out of the numbers presented to my mind, and I knew so little of them individually. It was not like Isola to enter into a clandestine intimacy, as she must have done, and it has troubled me to think that my example and my urging upon that one occasion may have been the successful opening to like transgressions not known even to me. I would sacrifice much to be assured of Isola's happiness."

"If Miss Redesdale would know how W. L. regards the sacred promise he has given her, let her send some friend she can trust to the address given below at any hour after eleven to-night. To avoid misapprehension, it may be well to state that this is one of the most notorious gilded gambling dens within the city limits. Seeing is believing—even if done by proxy."

A SINCERE WELL-WISHER."

And here followed an address.

Florry crumpled the note in her hand—her first thought simply scorn of the cowardly accusation.

"It is sure to be the underhand thrust of some enemy," she thought. "A man who will not come forward to make a charge in his own proper person deserves no more attention than I shall give this."

She really intended to pass it over without the slightest observation, but she would have been less than woman had not the insidious words awakened anew that feeling of distrust with which she had before this regarded her fiance.

"If it should be true—if Walter should care no more for his promise to me than this intimates? Is it not my duty to discover the truth?"

She smoothed out the crumpled note and read it again. She had more tolerance for the writer now; it was a cowardly part for one man to betray another, but it was done in all kind intention for her welfare. If it was a deliberate misstatement, made with the belief that she would not act upon it, and meant to instill the slow poison of distrust in her mind, it was surely her duty to prove it so. If true—The red lips set themselves in a firm line, and a resolute light, which did not bode well for Walter Lynne in such a case, shone out of the hazel eyes.

The words she had overheard the day before, and forgotten utterly in her subsequent unrest resulting from those reminiscences Kenyon's picture had called up, and the uncertainty of her girl-friend's fate, recurred now. Very heavily did they weigh in the scale against the good faith of her lover.

She dressed for walking and went out, with that crumpled anonymous note held in the clasp of her gloved fingers, under shelter of her saffron muff.

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## A HEAVY COLD.

BY JOE JOE, JR.

I'll tell you what it is, my friend,  
I've got a cold you see,  
Or, I might say in other words,  
A bad cold has got me.  
I don't do anything but sneeze,  
And then when I get through,  
For sake of some variety  
I just begin anew.  
Already I have gone and sneezed  
The buttons from my coat,  
I've sneezed my solid front teeth out  
And now I'm in a roar.  
I've cracked my head loose from my neck,  
So violent is the crash;  
And I have shattered every pane  
That's in my window-sash.  
I only breathe in sneezes now,  
Since every breath's a sneeze;  
My nose blows its own horn, but not  
With a great deal of ease.  
Though not addicted to the weed,  
It's obvious to you,  
If anybody speaks to me,  
I answer with a "tch!"  
I've blown my handkerchief to shreds,  
I blow the lamps all out;  
It's awful on a pair of lungs  
Which are not very stout.  
This cold's not a bad cold, but as good  
As any I have seen;  
I think the month's treatment would  
Be nitro-glycerine!  
This cold's entirely too large  
By several degrees!  
I'd like to hire a good strong man  
To come and help me sneeze.

## The Convict's Scheme.

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

"LILLIAN!"  
Rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed Lillian Dempsey turned from the deep bay window, and confronted the elderly lady who had spoken her romantic name.

"Well, aunt Susan, what is it?" she asked, in her silvery tones.

"Come here, girl."  
Lillian crossed the great parlor with a smiling countenance, for she expected a lecture from her maiden aunt, concerning the duties of young ladies on the eve of marriage, as Lillian was; and she was surprised when the old lady extended the paper which she had been perusing, with the request that she should read the first paragraph on the fourth page.

Wondering what it could be, Lillian took the journal, and felt her cheeks grow pale when her gaze fell upon the caption of the particular paragraph.

"Aunt, it can not be!" she exclaimed, turning to her relative, with a fearful countenance. "That bad man can not be at large. I will not believe it!"

"Let me assure you, Lillian, of the veracity of that paragraph," replied Susan, confidently. "Anthony Doudore is at large, and we shall soon see him around in these parts."

Lillian's fragile form shook like the aspen leaf at her aunt's last sentence; but her eyes were mastering the brief paragraph, which ran as follows:

**"THE NOTORIOUS DOUDORE AT LARGE!"**—Last night's dispatches from Auburn convey the intelligence that the notorious "Aunt" Doudore has effected his liberation from the penitentiary. His crime is still fresh in the minds of the people of this section, and it behoves them to be on the alert for the convict, as he may make his way hither. A reward of three thousand dollars is offered for his recapture.

"Yes, aunt, we must watch for him," said Lillian, in a tone which betrayed fear. "The *Index* speaks wisely. He may come this way, for you know that he hates me: you know what he said to me as he passed me in the court-room on his way to prison."

"Yes, yes, Lillian. That was a dreadful threat, and since that hour when you told him that you would not marry him, he has been a desperate man. Girl, you might have reformed him!"

For a moment Lillian Dempsey did not reply: she reread the startling paragraph, and the rose hue, which was returning to her cheeks, fled again.

"Reform Anthony Doudore?" she said, throwing a strange look into her aunt's face. "The volcano which broke from his heart that night was there when I told him 'no.' I know more about him than you, aunt Susan, and I bless the day when I refused his offer."

"Well, well; you giddy girls think that every foolish thing you do is for the best. But you rue it sometimes, and I feel that you are going to rue your words."

With this prophecy the old lady rose and left the room.

Lillian returned to the window, and buried her pretty face in the elegant lace curtains.

"Oh, if I had never met that man!" she said, and then for a brief period she lived over the past, which, with its days of excitement, burned like fire in her brain.

Anthony Doudore, the escaped convict, had encountered her at a fashionable watering place, several years prior to the opening of our story. She was a wild girl of seventeen then, and he was a handsome man of five and twenty. He soon became her companion in moonlight walks and drives along the beach, and, one night, he sought Lillian's hand in matrimony, he was shocked to hear her lips utter a refusal. He demanded her reasons for the unexpected finale to his passionate wooing, and she calmly told him that she had learned something regarding his past life. That was enough!

Without a word, but with a look of intense hatred, he rose to his feet, and thus they parted.

Another man took his place—a man whom Lillian truly loved. She forgot Anthony Doudore, and he did not cross her path for a twelvemonth. Then he came with the fury of the hurricane.

One night Gerald Adams, our heroine's new lover, was shown down at her side, and Lillian recognized the assassin as he sprang from his concealment to fly. Anthony Doudore, the discarded, was found in the city, and arrested for the crime just written. He had gold, and therefore the testimony was, to no small degree, conflicting. He and his witnesses said that Gerald Adams had grossly insulted him, hence the crime. But, Lillian's testimony killed his hopes; the lawyers could not entangle her, and Anthony Doudore received a life sentence before the judicial bar!

"Stone walls shall not inclose me forever!" he hissed at Lillian after the trial. "I'll pay you up for this ere long, if it takes my heart's blood!"

And now that that man was free, well might Lillian Dempsey tremble. She thought of all this at the window, and

wished that the brave man to whom she had lately given her heart was at her side. But he was far away.

"Ha! they hunt the wild bird, but they shall not catch him. He flies to the work of vengeance, and ere long Lillian Dempsey shall feel his talons."

Thus murmured a bearded man, who occupied a seat in a smoking car, which was being whirled over the road toward the city wherein a beautiful girl shuddered at the remembrance of a vow made long ago.

There was nothing about the man to denote that he was a convict. Instead of a cleanly shaven face, a long black beard fell over a snowy shirt-front, and raven locks lay lightly upon his broad shoulders.

He held a paper before his face, and, as he spoke, his dark eyes rested upon the paragraph which drove the color from Lillian Dempsey's cheeks.

Despite his lengthy locks and beard, that man was Anthony Doudore, and when the iron horse paused in the great depot of N—, he seized the leather valise, which lay at his feet, and hurried from the train. No one scrutinized him, and, with the boldness ever characteristic of the man, he read the poster which offered three thousand dollars for his arrest, before he left the station.

"I wonder if she will come," he murmured, as he walked down the spacious apartment. "That dispatch will surely deceive her, for he was in the city when I left—yes, I feel that she will come."

Anthony Doudore was already playing for vengeance on the fair girl who had sent him to Sing Sing, to pay the awful penalty attached to crime in the horrors of a life-long incarceration. From the prison he had hastened to New York, and while hidden from the detectives, by companions in crime, he had learned much about Lillian's life since the trial. He knew that she was on the eve of marriage, and one day he accidentally encountered her betrothed on the street.

The city clocks were proclaiming the hour of six, the morning following the work of the mob, when three women entered the room wherein lay the corpse of the convict.

They were inmates of the house to which the body had been brought, and placed in a plain coffin, and they had once been the friends of the wicked dead.

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